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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a program for dealing with two affective detractors from learning: (1) a negative attitude toward school, and (2) personal problems. The program consists of three basic interacting components: (1) Self Programmed Control Technique Series--a method giving persons greater control over involuntary personality traits; (2) Psycho-Cybernetics--a guide to life; and (3) Shortcut Learning Techniques--a means of allowing students to experience immediate learning reinforcement. In a trial use at East Los Angeles College, the program has shown that attitudes toward school have been modified positively as indicated by a 250% increase in Brown-Holtzman scores and that the occurrence of personal problems have dimished as indicated by a drop in Willoughby scores from the 72nd to the 38th percentile. Also the results of an anonymous questionnaire given to 236 students revealed that the number of students having excessive behavior in certain problem areas, such as smoking, drinking, and drug use, was lessened at the program's end. Actual improvement in grades and number of units completed were found to correlate with the affective changes. The ease of implementing the program and various ways of inexpensively incorporating it into a schcol's curriculum are also discussed. (AL)

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SELF-PROGRAMMED CONTROL: A NEW APPROACH TO LEARNING[1]

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My answer to the question, "Are Learning Skills Centers an effective educational service station?", is, "No, not effective enough!"

The basic problem as I see it is that until now Learning Skills Centers have focused primarily on the cognitive aspects of learning and not sufficiently on the affective aspects. Basic learning skills make up only one factor essential for efficient learning. Equally, if not more important, is the student's mental attitude and state of mind.

As I see it there are two major affective factors that must be dealt with. First, there is the student's usually negative attitude toward school. He most often finds schoolwork a chore and what's worse he usually doesn't think much of his learning capabilities. Secondly, there is the fact that most students are also plagued with any number of personal or emotional problems. Love, sex, drugs, parental difficulties, inferiority complexes, etc., are all capable of producing very real interference. If we are truly interested in improving our student's learning abilities we have to take into account these two, most crucial, factors.

I'm sure most of us are aware of this need. I think the main reason something hasn't been done about it heretofore is that we just haven't had any really

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effective means of dealing with the problem. I'd like to think that this may now no longer be the case. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to introduce a unique program that I feel goes a long way towards solving this problem. I refer to it as Self-Programmed Control (SPC).

Although this program has now been applied at a number of schools including UCLA, Golden West College and the University of Uppsala, Sweden (all within the past year), its main application has been at East Los Angeles College (ELAC) for the past two-and-a-half years.

The program at ELAC began thanks to a Title III project to help disadvantaged Mexican-American students. As a result of its initial success here it has been opened to all students as part of a regular 3-unit development study skills course for the past year-and-a-half.

The Two Basic Goals of the Program

The basic goals of the program are (1) to help instill a new positive attitude toward learning, and (2) to provide a student with an effective means for handling personal and emotional problems.

The Three Components of the Program

The program is made up of three basic interacting components: (1) The Self-Programmed Control (SPC) Techniques; (2) Psycho-Cybernetics; and (3) The Short-cut Learning Techniques.

The SPC Techniques

Perhaps the most important of the components is the first -- the SPC Techniques, for it serves the purpose of opening the door, of giving the student some real hope in the possibility of change. I'm sure I don't have to tell you that changing lifelong behavior patterns is not the easiest thing to accomplish. Much of man's behavior is so deeply ingrained that it has become automatic, that is, not that subject to voluntary control. Any remedial or rehabilitative program has to take this into account. The SPC techniques are aimed at eliminating or breaking through this "involuntary" barrier. They are a highly effective systematic means of giving a person greater control over his "involuntary" side (that is, his habits, attitudes, emotions, etc.).

There's no end to the possibilities of SPC. Just about any aspect of his behavior can now more easily be controlled by the student. For instance, he can gain greater control over his ability to react calmly in previously tense situations; e.g., studying, taking exams, giving a talk, socializing, handling everyday pressures, etc. He can also use it to more easily instill new study habits, be able to concentrate better, become better organized, stop procrastinating, break any bad habits, control his temper, express himself more assertively, control his moods, etc., etc.

SPC Explained

The approach is based on the premise that words and thoughts have the ability to produce reflexive or automatic responses. We know that words can act as conditioned stimuli. Pavlov long ago recognized this fact: "Obviously, for man speech provides conditioned stimuli which are just as real as any other stimuli... Speech, on account of the whole preceding life of an adult, is connected up with all the internal and external stimuli which can reach the cortex, signaling all of them and replacing all of them, and therefore it can call forth all those reactions of the organism which are normally determined by the actual stimuli themselves." (Pavlov, 1927)

This, then, is how one gains control over his involuntary behavior. By focusing on the appropriate thought (subvocal speech) sufficiently one can produce any positive reaction he wishes. This is the basic premise upon which the SPC techniques are based.

One of the first of the SPC techniques introduced to the student is "The Pendulum". It is an especially effective technique because it gives the student immediate concrete proof of this basic premise. Today, to illustrate this point, we shall go through the first stage of this technique.

The first step is to make a nine inch (9") pendulum using a piece of thread and a paper clip. Now, sitting up and with your elbow resting on the arm of the chair, hold the string between your forefinger and thumb and keep your eye on the paper clip (it should be fairly motionless to start). Next, begin programming in the thought that it will start to swing from left to right. That is, expect

it to start swinging in this direction. Soon, to your amazement, it will actually begin moving, automatically, in this direction. The reason it is moving is that the thought or expectation of the movement produces an automatic movement of your hand which is then amplified by the pendulum. Tell yourself that is is going to swing even more and watch it as it automatically responds to your thought, to your own command. And as you see it beginning to move now you begin to realize that you can respond, you can gain control over your automatic side and that by focusing on the right thought you will get the right action. You can next change the direction of movement to a circular one by programming in that it will begin to move in a circular direction. Almost immediately you should find the pendulum begin to move in this new direction, again automatically.

The SPC procedures involve going through a series of such steps, each step increasing the probability of a positive response to the next one. Thus, after going through one of these procedures a person finds himself considerably more responsive to the positive thoughts or goals he wishes to program in. And after using the techniques for a time he soon finds that he can program in his positive thoughts effectively without having to first go through the SPC procedure. Thus, these techniques act as a catalyst or bridge showing a person that he can, indeed, accomplish just about anything he sets his mind on.

The greater control afforded by these procedures increases the student's self-confidence (expands his self-image) and makes the possibility of positive change really believable. This in turn opens his mind to the other two components of the program: Psycho-Cybernetics and the Shortcut Learning Techniques.

Psycho-Cybernetics

The Psycho-Cybernetics component is aimed at improving the student's ability to deal with personal and emotional problems. Psycho-Cybernetics (Maltz, 1960) is a positive thinking type book that offers the student a general guide to coping with life, providing answers to many questions and solutions to many personal problems plaguing the average student. Thanks to the SPC techniques the student is now more ready to believe in what a book like Psycho-Cybernetics teaches. As a result of SPC he quickly becomes convinced in the power of positive thought,

the philosophy espoused by this and other similar books.

Shortcut Learning Techniques

The third component, Shortcut Learning techniques, allows the student to experience immediate reinforcement of the new positive attitudes toward school he is beginning to program in. It is pointed out to him that the "A" student is often so, not necessarily because he was born with an oversized brain, but because through trial and error he has acquired many of the shortcuts or more efficient ways of learning, techniques which the student can now learn directly. The point that such methods do make learning more efficient and easier is quickly impressed upon the student the very first session, when he is shown how, by using certain memorization techniques, he can memorize a twenty-five (25) digit number (e.g., 1945200155595414952345) in a matter of seconds. The average student who all his life has believed that only "geniuses" could perform such a feat is extremely impressed with his new-found mental powers. Thus, the student's appetite for such shortcut techniques is whetted and he quickly takes to other such procedures offered (e.g., SQ3R for reading improvement, how to take tests, how to take notes, etc.). The immediate positive effects resulting from the use of such techniques then reinforce the new positive attitudes being formed. He now finds learning easier and more rewarding and realizes he is capable of so much more than he thought possible. As a result of this change in attitude he is no longer afraid to admit he needs help and he becomes more highly motivated to make up any deficiencies in his basic learning skills (e.g., vocabulary, spelling, grammar, basic math, etc.).

As can be seen there is a positive interaction among all three components of the program, each serving to reinforce the student's new positive attitude towards school as well as towards himself. Now, let us look at some of the results achieved thus far with the SPC program.

Results Achieved Thus Far With SPC

The data to be reported herein was derived from the ELAC Title III project. Both subjective and objective indices have been used to measure the program's effectiveness. All measures appear to indicate a clear-cut positive effect.

To give you some idea of this effect we will first look at the results of two recent classes, a Spring '71 mid-semester class, N = 82, and full-semester class, N = 55 (approximately 9 and 18 weeks of instruction, respectively).

First, with regard to the goal of improving a student's attitude toward school -- the average percentile score on the Brown Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes for the mid-semester class was found to go from 19.8 to 47.2, a rise of almost 250%. For the full-semester class the change was even greater, 15.3 to 53.0.

With regard to the second goal, improving a student's ability to cope with personal or emotional problems -- the average percentile scores on the Willoughby test (a measure of inability to cope with problems) for the mid-semester class was found to drop from 73 to 39. For the full-semester class the improvement was even greater, 72 to 29.

A corresponding increase in grades and units completed accompanied these positive affective changes. For example, for the mid-semester class there was an average rise of 0.25 grade points over the previous semester and the average units completed went up from 9.30 to 12.23 (there is no grade data for the full-semester class as most students in the class were fresmen with no previous records for comparison). The grades for the SPC course itself were not included when comparing the two semesters, as this might have inflated the difference since I tend to give many high grades. (I do not believe in grading on the curve as I feel it tends to produce a "self-fulfilling prophecy" effect. If you expect a certain percentage of students to be failures or so many to be average you are more likely to produce them. If one is more intent on bring students "up to level" than to "screening students" he is more likely to produce above average students.)

Also of interest, in addition tc the above objective indices, are some of the subjective data. This includes both an anonymous questionnaire and student progress reports.[3]

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[3]It was made very clear to the students that their grade in the course would not be affected at all by their performance on any of these objective or subjective indices.

Of special interest in the questionnaire was a question dealing with excesses. The student was asked to indicate which of certain areas he had been excessive in prior to the course and which of these excesses he had been able to curtail. The following figures are for a total of 236 students, 99 from a Fall '70 mid-semester class and 137 from the two Spring '71 classes:

	# Excessive prior to course	# Eliminating excess after course	% Eliminating excess
Food	90	65	72%
Cigarettes	53	37	70%
Alcohol	53	48	91%
TV	102	84	82%
Marijuana	32	22	69%
Pills ("Uppers" and "Downers")	12	10	83%
LSD	7	7	100%
Heroin	1	1	100%
Gambling	12	9	75%

The interesting thing about this curtailment of excesses is that it occurred primarily as a side benefit of the program. No concentrated attack was made on the excesses. It is felt that the curtailment occurred primarily because of three factors: (1) the general increase in ability to relax; (2) the greater enjoyment of other areas of life; and (3) the greater amount of self-control.

As part of the program, each student was asked to keep a progress report. Following is a sample of such reports. Included with each report is the student's Brown-Holtzman and Willoughby percentiles before and after. It should be kept in mind that these reports are typical and not the exceptional ones.

B., M. BH 23-50; W 99.9-89

4/12/71 Before applying the techniques, I have been getting 28 or 29 out of 40 on a Psych. I test and after I got 37 out of 40 on a test. I have read five chapters in Psycho-Cybernetics; I don't think I could have done it so soon without SPC. I used the SQ3R method in studying for a test in Health 10, found it effective.

4/26/71 I found that I could talk to people easier when I went out last Saturday and therefore I had more fun. I enjoyed studying for a history test

more than every before. I also used a shortcut relaxation technique before the test -- got an "A" on it.

4/28/71 I am beginning to use the techniques to program in goals on a daily basis.

5/3/71 I used to be very depressed most of the time; now I program in that I'm going to be happy every day and it's becoming a habit. I feel so much better and I find myself accomplishing much more.

5/5/71 Last Monday I started a diet and I have not gone away from it even once, and before it was very hard for me to keep a diet. I program in the thought that I'll keep the diet by using the negative-positive response or just by using the shortcut relaxation technique daily.

5/10/71 I used the flash cards method to study for the vocabulary quiz in this class and got 93% correct. I feel that I'm losing some of my inhibitions; I program in every night that I'm going to be happy the next day and most of the time I am. I'm also beginning to live in the present, not in the future or in the past as I used to. I used to be very afraid when I thought about the future, but now I'm realizing that the future is what you make of it. I still have so many goals to work toward but somehow I know I'm going to make it.

5/12/71 I used the SQ3R method to study for a Psych I test and I got an "A" on the test. I feel more ambitious now and much more enthusiastic about life, and I feel I'm going to accomplish everything I set my mind to, whereas before I was getting to the point where I didn't see any purpose to life. I felt as though everything was coming down on me.

G., R. BH .5-37; W 38-17

1st week I didn't think this class would help me very much.

2nd week The technique didn't work for me, and I was going to give up.

3rd week I tried and the technique started to work. I've started to get interested in the course and my other classes. I've been reading the Psycho-Cybernetics and Vocabulary books and now like the class. I started getting better grades and everything seems to be working out pretty good for me.

4th week I know now that I can do anything if I apply myself to it. I started achieving some of my goals and will achieve all of my goals by the time this course is over.

5th week All my classes now seem easier for me, and I now have more time for other things to do. People are friendlier and I feel very gregarious. I don't procrastinate anymore and I turn in my assignments on time.

J., L. BH 4-40; W 97-52

4/12/71 Since the very first class meetings that we've tried the different techniques, I've noticed an inner good feeling within me.

4/14/71 Got results from my midterms and was very happy to have gotten all "A's" and "B's". I feel I'm really having confidence in what I do and how I feel about myself.

4/19/71 My study habits have improved. The SQ3R technique has helped with my reading. I get a lot more out of reading. I especially like the association technique. It has helped enormously with the vocabulary words from 30 Days To A More Powerful Vocabulary. It makes the whole process of learning new words fun.

4/21/71 The worst time of day for me was about from 2:00-6:00. Usually I felt tired and not willing to get to my school work during this time. Now I can easily program myself to get with it at this time of day. Instead of having a tired feeling, I feel alert and willing to get down and do my school work.

4/26/71 I had to give an oral speech recently in one of my classes. I was nervous about the whole thing. However, I programmed myself into not being so and I was amazed on how well I did.

I find I really have confidence in what I do. Before when I had an important decision to make, I always asked relatives and friends on what I should do. I worried constantly on any decision I had to make. I now make decisions without worrying or relying on others to tell me what's right or not. I feel much more independent.

5/3/71 I always felt my boss was so superior that I felt nervous when talking to her. I tried the negative-positive technique, and I was able to carry a good conversation without feeling inferior.

R., G. BH 26-70; W 72-38

1st week I came into the class kind of a disbeliever but after playing around with the Pendulum technique, I started to believe in it.

2nd week No progress to date with homework. I have noted some improvement in my self-confidence when I'm around my girlfriend.

3rd week Still no progress in my homework, but I'm still trying.

4th week Started Relaxation technique. I still prefer the Pendulum technique, a little progress in doing my homework.

5th week Got a 96 on my Trig. test, highest I have yet received in any of my math classes.

6th week Got a 93 on my Chemistry test. I am now starting to do my homework regularly.

S., J. BH 28-66.6; W 83-12

4/12/71 Greater relaxation. More at ease with people. Greater enjoyment of school and work. Sleep better at night. Less use of drugs and alcohol. More positive outlook, self-assurance. Still procrastinate on assignments.

4/19/71 Improvements becoming habits. Studying actually is more fun. It is getting increasingly easier to make speeches in my speech class; I used to dread writing essays for English I, now I'm consistently doing "A" work.

4/26/71 Use of SQ3R on history lessons and have amazing recall. I have finished Psycho-Cybernetics and I found it fascinating. I plan to read it again.

5/3/71 Progress coming right along; have found that the cold war between my parents and I is starting to taper.

Incorporating The SPC Program Into A School's Curriculum

There are a number of means available which can be used to facilitate incorporation of the SPC program into a school's curriculum. This includes: the SPC manual and the recording of the SPC techniques; detailed outlines for a full semester (54 hours), mid-semester (28 hours) and a condensed (12 hours) course; a video tape and/or film of a four-session (8 hours) condensation of the program; as well as an instructors' workshop.

With regard to the instructors' workshop, its aim is not only to instruct in the ways of teaching the SPC program, but also to allow instructors to benefit from the program themselves. No one is perfect and we can all certainly use something that gives us greater control over our lives. This in turn will make us better teachers, more positive in our attitudes towards a student's abilities and much less burdened by our own personal inadequacies. In addition, one becomes a more effective teacher of SPC if he himself has experienced its benefits.

It is recommended that, if possible, the program be offered as, or incorporated into a regular credit class. This provides the necessary external motivation to insure that the student initially practices the method sufficiently to make it work. Also, the student should not be forced to take the course. An introductory explanation of how it works and what it can do plus a brief demonstration of the techniques should be sufficient to get an initial group interested enough to try it. After this, word of mouth should do the rest.

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ABSTRACT

A major shortcoming of the educational system, heretofore, is that there has been no really effective means of eliminating learning's two most common detractors: 1) A negative attitude toward school and 2) personal problems. Without these two basic types of interference eliminated even the best learning skills program would be relatively ineffective. The paper introduces a highly effective approach which has already produced some phenomenal results in dealing with this affective side of learning.

The program is made up of three basic interacting components: 1) The Self-Programmed Control Techniques - A significant breakthrough giving a person greater control over his involuntary side (habits, attitudes, emotions, tensions, etc.) and raising his self-image. These highly impressive techniques (the paper includes a demonstration of part of one of these techniques) make the possibility of positive change really believable, thus opening the student's mind to the other two components of the program. 2) Psycho-Cybernetics - A general guide to life providing answers to many questions and solutions to many personal problems plaguing the average student. 3) "Shortcut Learning" Techniques (SQ3R, Memory Improvement, How to Take Tests, Etc.) which allow the student to experience immediate reinforcement of the new positive attitudes toward school he is beginning to program in.

The program has been taught as part of a 3-unit study skills course at East Los Angeles College for the past year and a half. All indices point to an extraordinary success. For example, in the area of attitude toward school the Brown-Holtzman scores rose a phenomenal 250%. And in the area of personal problems the average Willoughby score dropped from the 72nd to the 38th percentile, a remarkable improvement considering the relatively short length of the course. Also, the results of an anonymous questionnaire revealed that in those students indicating excesses in the following areas these percentages cut down: Food 72%; cigarettes 70%; alcohol 91%; TV 82%; marijuana 69%; pills ("uppers" and "downers") 83%; LSD 100%; heroin 100%; gambling 75%. Actual improvement in grades and number of units completed were found to correlate with the affective changes.

Also discussed is the ease of application of the program and the various inexpensive ways of incorporating it into a school's curriculum.